

User-centred Design Process: PHE Curriculum Supports

Background

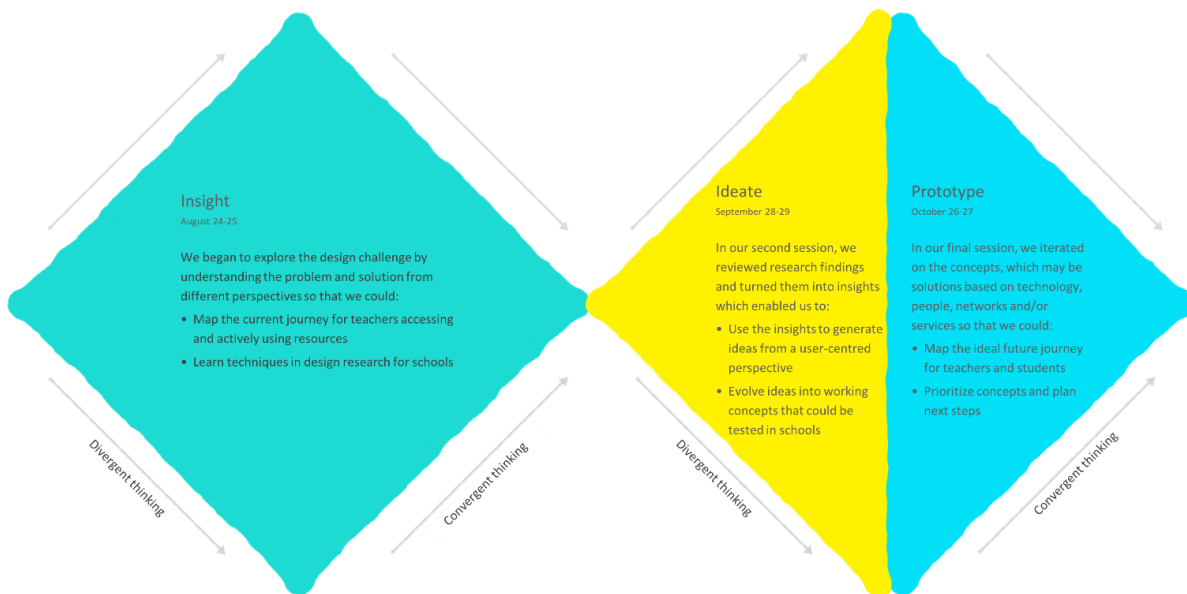
From a series of meetings throughout the Spring of 2017, Healthy Schools BC¹ and WellAhead² came to identify a system paradox: there is both high demand among BC educators for simple ways to access quality resources to facilitate student learning of BC’s physical and health education curriculum, AND there are many quality resources that are readily available and aren’t being accessed in a significant way.

We decided that tapping into the wisdom of the end users – BC teachers – and co-creating solutions with them would yield a better result than using a traditional consultation process. From August to October 2017, Healthy Schools BC and WellAhead partnered with a group of 9

BC teachers in a user-centred design project to explore the question:

"how might we co-create a set of insights and ideas that will inform the design of quality, free PHE resources that meet teachers’ diverse needs, along with easy ways to access and share them?"

The design process, led by service-design firm *Harmonesse*, consisted of three sets of two-day workshops. In these sessions, we worked through three stages of the design process. (INSIGHT, IDEATE, PROTOTYPE) to map out the issue, conduct user research with teachers and education stakeholders, and integrate the insights from our research into the design and early stage testing of ‘prototype’ solutions.



¹ Healthy Schools BC is a partnership between the BC Ministries of Health and Education, the Directorate of Agencies for School Health BC, health authorities, education partners and other key stakeholders

² WellAhead is an initiative of the McConnell Foundation that focuses on integrating social and emotional wellbeing into K-12 education.

What we learned

The insight stage of the design process brought many important insights related to our design question. Here's a summary of our top nine insights:

#1: Teachers have diverse wants/needs for PHE resources

Our research demonstrated that teachers have a diverse range of wants and needs for PHE resources, and our solutions need to accommodate this diversity. Some teachers preferred more directive lesson plans, while others preferred the flexibility to adapt them. Some felt at a loss for finding resources, while others were overwhelmed by choice.

#2: Teachers' go-to resources aren't what we expected

WellAhead and DASHBC collaborated to create a 'catalogue' of BC-based online resources before the teacher group identified what they access/ use in our first workshop together. There were surprising differences between what we saw as key resources and what the teachers accessed.

#3: Teachers consistently desire simple, accessible resources

Despite different awareness, wants and needs, teacher interviewees had consistent principles in mind when thinking of what a quality resource looked like:

- Simple language, clear objectives
- Easily accessible (from multiple channels)
- Aligned with curriculum competencies and language
- Up-to-date
- Evidence-based
- Scaffolded (building on previous knowledge)
- Easily adapted to context
- Teacher-vetted
- Free or low-cost

#4: Word of mouth, peer-to-peer sharing outmatch digital solutions

There are multiple examples of the high-quality resources teachers want that already exist. Connecting the right teachers to the right resources at the right time is a major challenge. Given the abundance of

resources that exist, word of mouth and peer-to-peer sharing are critical to access to promote awareness, access and use of existing supports.

#5: Teachers feel stressed and unprepared to deliver the redesigned PHE curriculum - and it's affecting their mental-wellbeing

Many teacher interviewees noted that meeting the demands of the redesigned PHE curriculum was causing them significant stress. Inconsistent pre-service and in-service learning opportunities contributed to teachers feeling unprepared.

#6: Teachers are uncomfortable leading mental and sexual health curricula

Few teachers were comfortable with their skills across all areas of the re-designed curriculum, and mental and sexual health were consistently the most challenging. Teachers' personal backgrounds, along with students' and parents' culture made this content more complex to address. Teachers also made it very clear that the teaching context for mental and sexual health are very different for elementary vs. middle and high school.

#7: There are polarized opinions on the changing role of a PHE teacher

Teacher interviewees had diverse and polarized opinions on the changing expectations for the role of a PHE teacher. Some favoured a more traditional sports focus over the new curriculum's more inclusive approach to building the physical literacy of all students. Some favoured activity-based learning over leading learning in comprehensive areas of health. There was a consistent desire to protect movement and activity time. Particularly at the secondary level, there was a lack of clarity on the roles of all teachers (regardless of subject area) and other school staff in promoting student health and wellbeing.

#8: Social media: powerful and under-utilized

Our interviews with organizations that develop resources to support teachers revealed that social media was seen as a powerful way to reach teachers. Most organizations interviewed noted they had limited capacity to manage their social media. Few organizations used web analytics to drive their marketing strategies.

#9: Like-minded organizations have limited awareness of each others' work

Organizations that aim to support schools in their wellbeing efforts noted they aren't as familiar as they could be with which organizations are working in which districts and communities. From a provincial perspective, efforts could be made to better coordinate supports within and across communities.

The ideas

The teacher team applied insights from the research phase to design a set of ideas (i.e. prototypes) as solutions to the problems we identified.

Idea #1: More Usable, Navigable Online Resources

Context

Our user research revealed that teachers often struggle to find appropriate, high quality resources online in a timely way. Online searches can return massive numbers of resources to explore. Sifting through resources to find ones that meet teachers' aims for curriculum, are age and grade-level appropriate, and that are effective and engaging can be a painstaking and time-consuming process. This can be especially difficult for elementary teachers with responsibilities for PHE, as they are also leading multiple other subjects simultaneously and have little time to dedicate to searching for PHE specific resources.

The Proposed Solution

Teachers proposed online resources should have the following features:

- Can be accessed in a central location, and doesn't require registration
- Resources are teacher-vetted and user-rated
- Resources are searchable by grade level and curriculum competency focus
- Resources tagged with symbols (e.g. video, editable, cost required, free)



Idea #2: The Free Online Course

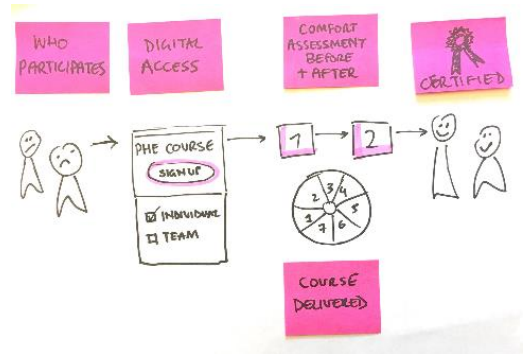
Context

Many teachers we interviewed felt unprepared to meet the demands of the new PHE curriculum, and noted that this has caused them significant distress. Teachers and the larger education system are looking for low-barrier, low-cost professional learning opportunities to support teachers in facilitating learning following the competencies of the new curriculum.

The Proposed Solution

This free online course addresses the need for practicing teachers to gain the fundamental knowledge and skills to implement all seven content areas of the new PHE curriculum. Course curriculum would be curated by a group of content experts, and participants would spend half of their time engaging with readings and resources, and the other half engaging with a teacher-cohort through an online platform. The incentives for teachers to participate would be:

- Reduced stress and improved confidence in meeting competencies of new curriculum
- Ability to log course time as pro-d hours
- Certification upon completion recognized on teachers' curriculum vitae



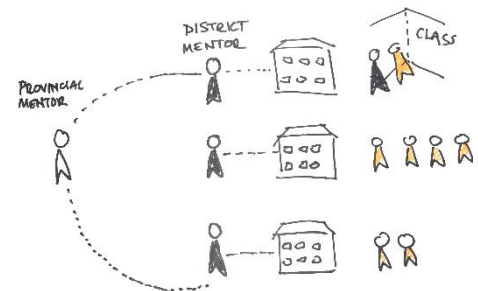
Idea #3: The PHE Teacher-mentor Network

Context

Up to 30% of new teachers leave the profession in their first five years³, many of whom note being overwhelmed by the demands of the job as a primary reason for leaving. Having access to experienced and trusted mentors may help support teachers through this challenge, and support ongoing in-service professional learning.

The Proposed Solution

The PHE Teacher-mentor Network builds on research supporting individualized, multi-session, and progressive learning opportunities as an effective way to transform teacher practice. This proposed mentoring network would include school district-level mentors with dedicated time who would work with local teachers to increase their confidence and competence in all PHE curriculum areas. A provincial level mentor would provide leadership and support to the school district mentors.



Next steps

The next steps are to identify organizations that are capable of further prototyping (i.e. early-stage testing) the ideas, collectively learn from each other, and upgrade the ideas with the insights we develop through the process. By collectively prototyping the ideas, the aim is to further develop them as solutions to improving access and use of PHE resources, as well as build collaborative practice and co-learning among organizations in the field.

³ CTF. (2004). Recruitment and retention of teachers: Why teachers entering the profession remain or leave. CTF Economic and Member Services Bulletin (2004-5), 1-20.